

# Kudos to a Landmark Judgment

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THE MAY 30, 2009 VERDICT of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana (Gurleen Kaur and others Vs State of Punjab and others) is an eye-opener, as well as a reminder for all, on the fundamental definition of a 'Sikh'. It intensely reinforces the eminence of 'unshorn hair' as a vital requisite for being rightfully called a 'Sikh'.

That one of the High Courts of India has adjudicated: **"A True Sikh is Keshdhari"** – hammers, loud and strong, not on an emotional plane alone, but with juridical sanction that any distortion or misinterpretation of Guru Gobind Singh's commandment by sections of Sikh community today is a self-serving unwarranted frailty of disposition!

It needs a lot of conviction and moral strength, coupled with rightful mentoring, to be able to stand out from amongst peers of virtually opposing interests. And what an accomplishment if such 'standing out' wins admiration! That tantamounts to an entire battle won.

Trouble arises when lack of intrinsic motivation veers one to question the need for maintaining an exclusive '*Bana*' in today's world. This is exactly where Gurleen Kaur felt the need to move Court.

As a young girl seeking admission in Guru Ram Das Medical College, Amritsar, she was rudely shaken awake from slumber, when denied the same. Since she trimmed her eyebrows, she was not considered a rightful candidate for being admitted against the 'reserved quota' for Sikhs by the College authorities. She felt challenged by this rejection as anyone would, because all around we see a majority of women from Sikh families getting their eyebrows trimmed, and indulging in other such practices for self-adornment (gone are the days when Sikh patriarchs would turn their prodigal sons out from their homes for trimming their beards or hair for whatever reasons!) Consequently, by moving court, she literally stirred the hornet's nest and mobilized various Gurdwara Prabandhak Committees, international organizations, saints, intellectuals, priests, preachers and legal experts to action. References were cited from literature by Macauliffe, old as well as new *Rehatnamas*, the daily Sikh '*Ardas*', various Gurdwara Acts and Guru Granth Sahib, so much so that the final 154 page judgment is the most comprehensive and exhaustive document on this issue in the annals of Sikh history.

This verdict lays to rest all speculation over the dilemma "To be or not to be", and unveils, with immaculate clarity, the importance of '*Saabat Soorat*' being directly proportional to earning the right to be called a 'Sikh'. Ruefully, most of us have lost this right! The emancipated youth of today have drifted away from values which their predecessors not only cherished, but lived and died for. It is a revealed truth:

ਬਾਬਾ ਜਿਸ ਤੂ ਦੇਹਿ ਸੋਈ ਜਨ ਪਾਵੈ ॥ ਪਾਵੈ ਤ ਸੋ ਜਨੁ ਦੇਹਿ ਜਿਸ ਨੋ ਹੋਰਿ ਕਿਆ ਕਰਹਿ ਵੇਚਾਰਿਆ ॥ ਇਕਿ ਭਰਮਿ  
ਭੂਲੇ ਫਿਰਹਿ ਦਹ ਦਿਸਿ ਇਕਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਲਾਗਿ ਸਵਾਰਿਆ ॥

[SGGS: 918]

which signals that 'Divine Grace' can alone enable us to comprehend the value of 'Bani' and 'Bana'. After comprehension :

ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਧਨੁ ਸਭੁ ਸਉਪਿ ਗੁਰ ਕਉ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ [SGGS: 918]

enjoins us to 'surrender ourselves' to our Guru in accordance with the will of God/'Akalpurakh', and not tamper with the designs of Nature. Having created Khalsa, our Tenth Master had reckoned:

rihnl rhy soel is`K myrw, auh swihb mY aus kw cyrw ]

Thereby the Master sanctified the *Kesh* as to '*Rehat*' - part and parcel of the five 'Kakkars', and an affectionate bonding with 'Shabad-Guru', by recitation of 'Gurbani' as daily routine.

Let us pray to Akalpurakh, in all earnestness, seeking forgiveness for straying away from the Ordained Truth – "We have lost our way, God, help us find way back home":

ਮੋ ਕਉ ਤਾਰਿ ਲੇ ਰਾਮਾ ਤਾਰਿ ਲੇ ॥ ਮੈ ਅਜਾਨੁ ਜਨੁ ਤਰਿਬੇ ਨ ਜਾਨਉ ਬਾਪ ਬੀਠੁਲਾ ਬਾਹ ਦੇ ॥  
[SGGS: 873]

With a childlike simplicity, let us seek strength from such a Master who reciprocates and compensates us manifold even for one act performed lovingly for Him:

crn srn gur eyk pYNfw jwie cl ]  
siqgur kot pYNfw Awgy hoie lyq hY ]

The High Court judgment has indeed triggered a moral debate, stimulating an entire community to internalize, introspect and amend the vast damage already done!

